How does the Soviet Union reverberate today?

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Introduction

The year 2023 marks the 101st anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union. But it is also the 31st year since the people in Russia live without the Soviet Union. Two young generations have grown up who weren't born in that country and can't relate to it based on their own experiences. For many, it is thus an occasion to look back at the past with mixed feelings. Because there is a vast gulf between what had been in place in the past and what is present now in almost all spheres of life and the society.
In this process of soul searching, many wonder what could have happened if the October 25, 1917 Revolution did not occur and the Bolsheviks did not assume power. Two scenarios exist for that case - one rosy and the other apocalyptic.

According to Yakov Kedmi, a renowned Soviet-born former Israeli security expert, the Russian power elite completely degraded by 1917. It wasn't capable of preserving Russia as a state. If the Bolsheviks led by V.I. Lenin hadn't carried out the revolution in October 1917, then Russia wouldn't have existed today. If any of the old state elite had been in power or the Tsarist rule continued, Russia would have ceased to exist. It was the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, who, with their reforms and transformations that began after the revolution, carried out Russia's transition to the path of development, and the subsequent Stalinist modernization turned it into a powerful superpower.[1] This narrative is echoed by millions of citizens in Russia today. This group includes those who had doubts about the merits of socialist revolution when the counter revolution of 1991 was in the making. But now they are convinced that the destruction of the Soviet Union was a great loss. It is a realization that dawned after they experienced the reality of living in a capitalist society.

But there is another influential group who holds the opposite view and tries to paint a rosy picture of Imperial Russia. It is the ruling class comprising mostly former members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). They quickly refashioned their outlook to sail along the wind which was blowing in post-Soviet Russia under Yeltsin's rule. Their conversion resembled when human individuals convert from one religious faith to another with a typically hostile attitude to the abandoned faith and fond acceptance of the new faith with zeal and devotion that often exceeds that of the original practitioners of their new faith. This group steadfastly believes the Bolshevists led by V.I. Lenin caused immense harm to the historical Russian state, which took shape as an empire in 1721 thanks to state building over eight centuries by the great Russian Czars like Vladimir the Baptist, Ivan Grozny, Aleksandr Nevski, Dmitri Donskoi, Ivan the third, Peter the first, and Catherine the second. For the creation of the internationalist USSR, the Bolsheviks divided and redistributed vast territories of the Russian empire into numerous national republics. It was accompanied by voluntary ceding of many original Russian lands to various ethnic groups inhabiting these republics. As a result, when the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991 and its constituent Union republics became independent countries, the historical Russian state was reduced to almost half of its original territory.

In their view, the socio-economic transformation that the Bolsheviks carried out wasn't without question. It came at a terrible cost of lives lost, massive destruction and disruptions caused which could

[1] (Source: https://dzen.ru/a/ZKeHqU_GQRZs9MM_)

be avoided if the Bolshevists didn't topple the Provisional Government and capture power in October 1917. President Vladimir Putin even doubts whether Lenin and Stalin should have a place in the list of great people in the history of Russia[2]. To many outsiders, it is mind-boggling to see the depth of hostility to Soviet heritage from those who benefited most from the Soviet power. From their proletariat working class roots, they rose to the top to occupy key positions in the Soviet power structure thanks to the Bolshevik revolution and the socio-economic transformation that empowered the working class. If the October Revolution hadn't occurred; if the Tsarist aristocracy, its power elites and bureaucracy hadn't been destroyed and the working class not empowered, there could be hardly any realistic chance for the sons and daughters of peasants, industrial workers, day labourers, sweepers, cleaners, and cooks to rise to the top to become managers, administrators, captains of socialized industry and agriculture and dominate every aspect of public life in the Soviet Union.

But in Russia today the situation has changed. Common people are no longer so easily convinced. Because the transformative changes (?) that occurred in the thirty years of post-Soviet development were nowhere comparable to those achieved during the same period after the victory of the socialist revolution and founding of the Soviet Union. In 1947 thirty years after the revolution, the USSR was a superpower. It had many milestones to show to its public and the world. It bore the brunt of the attack of Nazi Germany during the WWII and played the key role in defeating it and salvaging the world from the scourge of fascism. Building on its victory, it succeeded in bringing about half of the world under its direct influence. It was at the apex of its might in terms of military strength and territory never before experienced in the history of Russia. Its economic might wasn't derived from selling oil and gas to the world. Stalin's programme of building socialism carried out at an accelerated pace through socialist industrialization, collectivization of agriculture and cultural revolution transformed a peasant Russia into an industrialized country. When Joseph Stalin took over, 85 percent of Russia's population was illiterate and less than 1 percent of global output of industrial products was produced in Russia. When he left after three decades of rule, the USSR ranked third in the world in the share of the educated population; it produced 20 percent of the world's industrial production.[3]

Hundreds of thousands of mills, factories, power plants, schools, kindergartens, day care centres, hospitals, clinics were built across the country. Illiteracy was eliminated at record speed thanks to the cultural revolution. Scientific, technical and industrial basis was created to step up nuclear research to end the dominance of the US in nuclear weapons. With guaranteed employment for every adult, free education at all levels, free health and early childhood care and many other types of state support, Soviet people had a secure life and confidence in tomorrow. There was an ideology that set a lofty goal - building an exploitation-free equal society. Although there were flaws in putting the ideology in practice, it provided a sense of direction and inspired people to live and work for a cause that no human society ever tried before. In itself it was an enormous strength that radiated positive energy across Soviet

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[2] Путин сомневается в том, что можно ли Ленина и Сталина включать в список великих людей, https://dzen.ru/a/YywZkn52IQ-nXwOR, 22 September 2022

[3] О том, зачем у россиян стирают и искажают память о СССР и превозносят Россию до 1917 года; https://dzen.ru/a/YxlwYqVzmXw6Z2UL?referrer_clid=1400&

society. People knew whatever difficulties they were facing at the moment; they were moving toward a better future. Aleksandra Pakhmutova, a famous Soviet-Russian singer, in a statement said, “The Soviet people were confident and knew that tomorrow would definitely be better than yesterday. People of those generations had many things to be proud of. They were proud of the fact that they created unique hydroelectric power plants and aircraft, and were the first to fly into space. They created numerous enterprises and unique production machines. Soviet people really felt like masters of their beloved Soviet country.”[4]

In contrast, the Russian Federation thirty years after its emergence from the ruins of the Soviet Union presents a different picture. True, there had also been transformative changes. But those changes were essentially in the reverse direction. Common people in their majority think no heights comparable to the first thirty years of the Soviet era had been achieved. A significant part was spent in recovery and restoration from the traumatic process that was unleashed as a result of restructuring the society. Abolishing socialism, transfer of the vast nationalized public property and assets which worked for the benefit of the entire people to private hands, reversing the gains of socialist industrialization by dismantling most industrial enterprises, decimating and disempowering the working class had their devastating effects on the society. The cumulative impact of all these changes was reflected in Russia thrown decades back from the top of its position in world politics and economy. Soviet-era egalitarian society was stratified by a wide gulf in income levels among population groups. The country abandoned the ideology that powered its ascent over seventy years. It was akin to the soul leaving the body. It became rudderless. The vacuum was filled by infiltration of the Western consumerist ideology with its focus on self, personal enrichment and wealth accumulation. A significant part of the population was pushed below the poverty line scrambling for survival. What has been in place now embodied by the Russian Federation doesn’t bear even a pathetic semblance of what had been achieved during the first thirty years of Soviet-era development.

The new ruling class set their sights on integrating Russia with the Western world by embracing liberal democracy and market economy. They did so with an understanding that they would be accepted as an equal partner. All security commitments including non-expansion of the NATO military alliance given in private to Mikhail Gorbachev, the last Soviet leader, would be honored. But the views from the West were different. A celebratory mood was reigning there. The fall of the Soviet Union was seen as an end of history and triumph of the West in the long war of confrontation with the Soviet Union and the world socialist system. From Russia’s side, there was no dearth of efforts to embrace the values and the economic model of the West with the aim for seamless integration with the alliance.

Besides the political system and the economy, the Soviet-era education system was also discarded and the Western system of higher education was introduced. Even the Russian language, the jewel of Russian culture, was allowed to degenerate. A floodgate was opened for infiltration of English sounding words

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[4] "Советские люди были уверены и точно знали, что завтра обязательно будет лучше, чем вчера": Александра Пахмутова, https://dzen.ru/a/ZUCZjQi2BkixbjEC?referrer_clid=1400&

not because they were essential, but because the new administrative and business elite and a section of the intellectuals were too eager to establish rapport with their Western partners and gain acceptance from them. The Soviet legacy as a whole was discarded in the 1990s during the rule of Boris Yetsin. President Vladimir Putin succeeded in building a perfect liberal Western state in Russia to strike a deal with the West as an equal partner.

The transformation that took place during the thirty years of post-Soviet development was mostly about recovery from self-inflicted destruction caused by Yeltsin's misrule, rebuilding to some extent the economy and coming back to the world stage to voice its own opinion reminiscent of the Soviet era. Rebuilding the economy had the focus on taming political influence of the well known group of the super rich (oligarch); reclaiming the role of the state in the economy and targeting social support to the poor and disadvantaged group of the population. However, the results achieved during this period were incremental. They were enough to send a positive note to citizens that things were improving following the disastrous rule of Boris Yeltsin, a nightmare that many Russians remember as "Лихие девяностые" (Dashing nineties). But they were far from catching the imagination of common people because no milestones had been reached or no grand achievements had been in sight.

The Soviet Union's coming back

Beginning in the late 2000s, Russia's ruling class started pivoting away from the West. By then it became apparent the only option available to Russia to be a part of the Western alliance was not as equals, but as a vassal of the US. It meant opening the country to Western companies and businesses for grabbing natural resources, and the loss of autonomy in protecting and defending Russia's own national interests. For a country like Russia proud of its civilization and conscious of its influence across the world, it wasn't a doable option particularly when the disastrous consequences of being loyal to the US during the 1990s became evident. The efforts in the new direction focused on cultivating a separate new distinct Russian identity to send the message that the country might have abandoned socialism and embraced capitalism, yet it was different, contrasting with the West in values and moral standards.

The inputs for framing the new identity were drawn from the Orthodox Christianity, cultural heritage of the Russian empire. Some aspects of Soviet-era public life and societal relations that were indigenous Russian and not linked with Marxist ideology were also accepted to integrate the Soviet past in the evolution of the Russian state. A mix of religion, traditional values and non-ideological practices of the Soviet-era was consciously cultivated to provide a new sense of identity to the people. But it wasn't still an ideology to inspire people, to cultivate a sense of distinctness from the West in the way it was during the period of the Soviet Union. The ideology was the same Western liberalism and consumerism.

These attempts gained momentum following the overthrow of the elected government of neighboring Ukraine in 2014 by nationalist forces supported by the Western powers and subsequent outbreak of armed revolt by ethnic Russian population in Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine. At that time with the help of the Russian-majority population of the region, Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula, a

historical Russian territory, belonging to the RSFSR but transferred to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954 by a decision of the then Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. Insurgency in the Eastern region led to establishment of two unrecognized statelets by ethnic Russian rebels - the Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) and the Lugansk People's Republic (LNR) with tacit military assistance by Russia.

In response, the US and the EU imposed sanctions on Russia. The Russian Federation was ousted from the G8 and other symbolic institutional structures that were created to give Russia a feel that it also belonged to the West. Russia's alienation from the West deepened following its intervention in the Syrian conflict on behalf of the Syrian Government. Russia was officially designated as an adversary of the Western military alliance that led to changing the posture of its deployment in Europe.

The sanctions regime against Russia intensified and aggressively expanded following its launching of the special military operation against Ukraine in February 2022. The country was cut off from the global financial system, almost all Western companies and businesses with operations in Russia left the country, a trade embargo was imposed and price caps for Russia's energy resources for export were enforced. Thus gradual distancing of Russia from the West culminated in its total isolation in the wake of the war. All windows of Russia opening to the West were effectively shut. All of Europe and North America coalesced in presenting a united counterweight to Russia with the aim of curbing its strength, capabilities, as well as its global ambitions. The Western military alliance built a coalition of 45 nations to defeat Russia by providing military assistance to Ukraine.

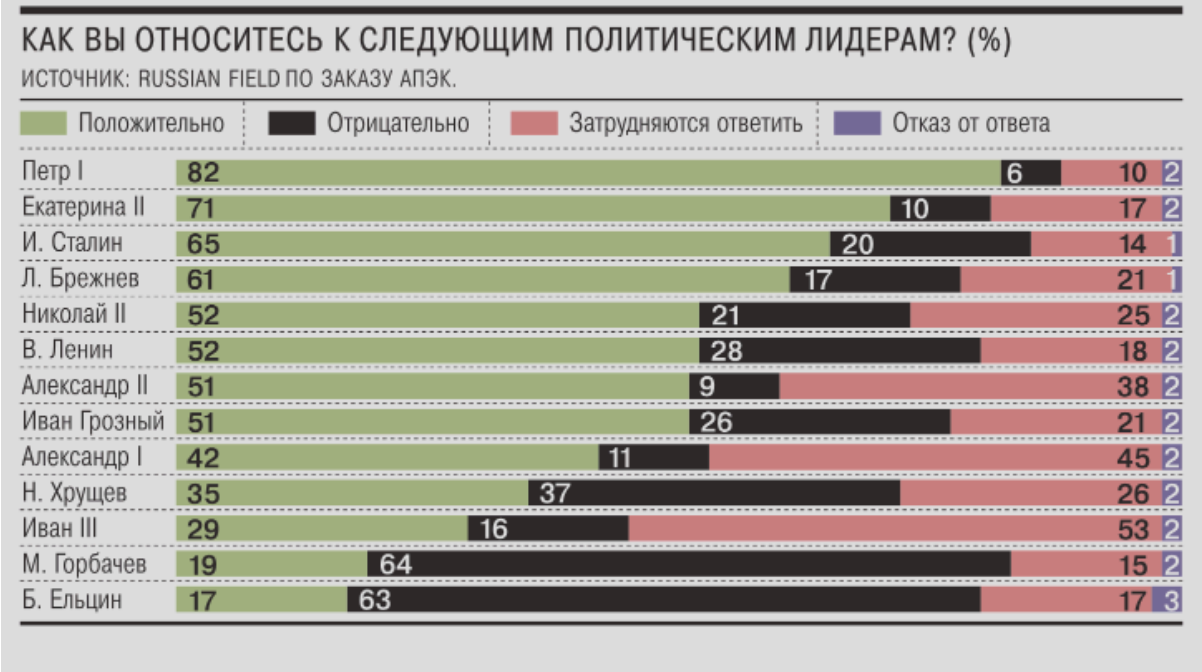
Against the backdrop of the ongoing war and tough confrontation with the West; the lost great country, the Soviet Union, came back to dominate the public mind in Russia today. The war laid bare the extent of losses suffered as well as the strengths and weaknesses of Russia. It also provided a context for comparing the performance of the Soviet Union and today's Russian Federation with their different social and economic systems in waging wars. Many became convinced that the absence of spectacular results and decisive victory as promised at the beginning of the war was mostly due to superiority of the socialist system in industrial and military-technical capacity building. In fact, the Soviet Union never disappeared from the public mind despite concerted efforts of the ruling elite to erase it from collective memory. The ongoing war with Ukraine has helped to convert the Soviet Union into a myth. Like all myths it has become more powerful than reality. People in Russia across all spectrums of the society are resorting today to various symbolic actions to demonstrate their yearning for the Soviet Union. In this paper we focus on some of the most visible actions.

Renewed focus on Joseph Stalin

In Russian society today, eliciting views on Stalin has become a sort of litmus test to gauge the mood of the people on where they stand with regard to their Soviet past. A reality of Russia's political culture, which is extremely rare in other countries, is that its leaders, no matter how great they were in their lifetime, are subject to slander and discreditation after they leave power or pass away. Lenin and Stalin were no exceptions. But Stalin was trampled and slandered most of all. His successor Nikita Khrushchev launched this process in 1956 which was approved as a state policy at the 20th Congress of the CPSU.

Stalin continued to be revered elsewhere in the world. But in his own country he was banned and his legacy was dismantled. This policy became so handy for all subsequent Soviet leaders that they chose to keep it in place. It was convenient because the benchmark for comparing their performance was removed; all leaders could say they had started a new wave of development which henceforth was hindered by the failures and mistakes made by Stalin in his programme of socialist construction.

Tarnishing Stalin's image was even more useful to the ruling class of post-Soviet Russia to justify the embrace of capitalism and liberal democracy. But Stalin didn't vanish, he survived in people's memory and is coming back. In a survey conducted by an agency, Russian Field, in August 2023 in Russia, Stalin became the third most popular political leader of the past. Of the respondents, 65% supported Stalin; while emperor Peter I got 82% support and empress Catherine II 71%. Leonid Brezhnev followed closely, having received 61% support. Gorbachev received just 19% support while Yeltsin 17%. They also had the largest share of negative votes (shown below).[5]



How could Stalin survive in collective memory for so long defying a concerted campaign of state-sponsored negative publicity such as his complicity in mass repression, torture, killings or even waging war against his own people. But Soviet people understood Stalin also did many good things that touched everyone's life in one or other way; they didn't refute that bad things didn't occur under his rule. However, they also recognize the context of that difficult period; the revolution was just two decades old, the enemies of the people's power didn't melt away, many of them changed colour and penetrated the Soviet power structure to subvert the revolution from inside. They understand bad things weren't the goal because no alternative means was available then to suppress these elements and

[5] Россияне ставят на модернизаторов https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/6172134

protect the revolution. In hindsight, purging suspicious elements from the party ranks in the late 1930s could be vindicated in the light of what happened subsequently. In three decades, the CPSU leadership was overtaken by elements who were hostile to socialism and hell bent on establishing rapport with the West under the guise of various reforms. The ground was prepared for sidelining patriotic leaders, true believers in Marxist socialism and pushing to the top level betrayers like Gorbachev and Yeltsin who killed the ideals of the Great October Socialist Revolution by dismantling the Soviet Union.

Now, people have come forward to take the fight to the authorities and bring Stalin back to public life. As part of these initiatives, new monuments to Stalin have been built in many parts of the country. Till today 110 monuments to Stalin have been built across Russia. [6]
Most recently, In the city of Velikiye Luki in the Pskov region, an eight-meter long monument to Joseph Stalin was erected on the premises of the “Mikron”plant in August 2023 in a private initiative with funds donated by people. This was the place where the Red Army won its first and strategic victory during WWII. After this, the city acquired the honorary title of “Little Stalingrad”. [7]

Another monument to Stalin was erected in the city of Orlov, Kirov region on 24 October 2023 on the initiative of local communists and with funds from local residents, entrepreneurs, and the regional committee of the CPRF. The monument was established exactly on that spot, where a monument to Stalin existed till 1956.[8]

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[6] Россия возрождается: в стране установлено 110 памятников Сталину, https://dzen.ru/a/ZTKx_9Ea4B0qT0aF?referrer_clid=1400&

[7] В Великих Луках открыли восьмиметровый памятник Сталину, https://www.svoboda.org/a/v-velikih-lukah-otkryli-vosjmimetrovyy-pamyatnik-stalinu/32549489.html

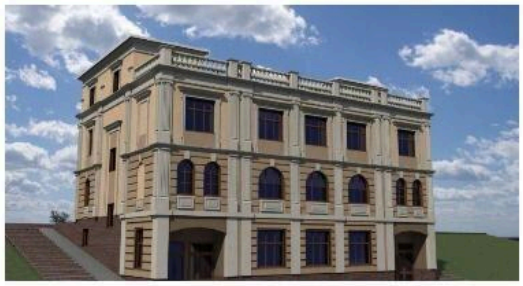
[8] Из народной памяти Сталина не вычеркнуть: в Кировской области открыли ему памятник. Чиновники в истерике и хотят "отменить" Сталина, https://dzen.ru/a/ZTiV8mseBWZSqgnn?referrer_clid=1400&

Stalin Centre

Besides monuments, local Russian citizens also came up with the idea of founding a Stalin Centre museum complex. The construction of such a complex began on 28 June 2023 in the city of Bor, Nizhny Novgorod region on the initiative of entrepreneur Alexei Zorov who is also the head of the local branch of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation on a plot of land owned by him.[9]

As envisioned by Zorov, this Centre should become the largest museum dedicated to the life and work of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin. He also emphasized it was a tribute to the memory of the people who built enterprises, hydroelectric power stations, and created collective and state farms. They fought, and won, and died in his name. Thousands of developments are associated with his name: the atomic bomb, the aviation and space industries, high-tech enterprises, etc.

[9]О начале строительства Сталин-центра в Нижегородской области, https://dzen.ru/a/ZKUpbH729XQ0d1c_



Interestingly, Joseph Stalin is respected in many countries in the world. In China, the leadership of the country shows great respect to Stalin. Xi Jinping, the top leader, on the eve of marking 65 years since the death of Stalin in 2018 called him the greatest politician not only in Russia, but throughout the world of all times. Amazingly there are streets named after Stalin in Great Britain, in Belgium and in France. In France, there is even one avenue named after Stalin, and there many such symbols in countries like China and Georgia.[10]

Stalin is such a personality that even the ruling class which uses every opportunity to discredit him in public doesn't mind going back to his governance style in difficult periods. For example, in the context of Ukraine war, Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, at a meeting of the Working Group of the Military-Industrial Commission held on 23 March 2023 read out a telegram from the CPSU General Secretary Joseph Stalin dated 17 September 1941 in which Stalin asked heads of defense industries "to follow orders honestly and on time," otherwise threatening to "smash them like criminals." Medvedev, by reading out this telegram, reminded current leaders of defense industries to ensure timely and adequate production of defense equipment to support war efforts in Ukraine .[11]

Lenin again

[10]Без Сталина Россия не сможет стать действительно суверенным государством": доктор экономических наук Валентин Катасонов; https://dzen.ru/a/ZSjLe3zK6wDybYA-?referrer_clid=1400&

[11] Медведев зачитал директорам военных заводов телеграмму Сталина, https://www.rbc.ru/politics/23/03/2023/641c74b09a7947064c5482f8

While Stalin became a negative figure in the Soviet Union from the late 1950s, Lenin continued to be revered. No one dared challenging his towering status as the founder of the Soviet Union and leader of the world working class. But in new Russia, Lenin, too, was denigrated, reduced to the level of an ordinary revolutionary. The accusations leveled against him, among others, were that he destroyed the Russian empire; in its place he created a state of voluntary union with numerous autonomous republics; he sowed chaos and permanent discord in the society and today's Russia is paying the price of his "misdeeds". According to this version, by creating the USSR Lenin planted a time bomb under the historical Russian state.

Lenin mausoleum on Moscow's Red Square became the easy target of the authorities to show to the public how insignificant Lenin has become in the new official vision of Russia's history. There had been attempts in the past to demolish the mausoleum on the Red Square and consign Lenin's preserved dead body to the grave. However, those attempts failed to materialize in the face of opposition from the public. Too many people in Russia still associate their lives with Lenin and his popularity shows no sign of abating. The All-Russian Centre for the Study of Public Opinion conducted a survey in May 2023 among the common people, asking the only question: "Who is Lenin for you personally?" Seventy-five percent of respondents answered that Vladimir Ilyich is a great revolutionary who saved Russia and founded the Soviet Union. [12]

The result speaks for itself and once again shows what a huge gulf separates the people of Russia and its government when it comes to Lenin and the Soviet legacy.

[12] 75% населения страны относится к Ленину, как к великому человеку, спасшему Россию". Что творит власть, https://dzen.ru/a/ZHRgbjnzZCeD9t5R

People are increasingly questioning the current practice of officially observing Victory Day on 9th May. This day is recognized in modern Russia as the most important national day. But the day is celebrated in a different way than in the past by taking out the essence of victory - who did it and how it happened. The credit is ascribed to some abstract Russia but not Soviet Russia or Soviet Union. The name of the person who was then at the helm - Joseph Stalin - without whom the victory in the greatest war in history would be unthinkable is either not mentioned at all, or if mentioned, presented in a distorted way. Russian people won regardless of Stalin, and he allegedly only got in the way, made mistakes and committed crimes. They say that a certain abstract people won the victory. To ignore Lenin, the mausoleum is draped on this day to hide from the public view (shown in the photo above). Many people understand the hypocrisy underlying this approach and want an end to it.[13]

Karen Shakhnazarov, a famous Soviet and Russian filmmaker, producer and screenwriter, director general of Mosfilm in 1998 and born in Krasnodar, had the following to say about V.I. Lenin "It is impossible to compare Lenin with anyone in world history. No one could ever influence world history the way he did. He was a phenomenal person who came from nowhere. Lenin didn't destroy any empire. The Russian empire was already fully destroyed at the moment when he came to power. And the First World War was lost because of the Provisional Government, which published Order No. 1 introducing in the armed forces the Army Soldiers' Committees. As a result, the army disintegrated because of the lack of a single

[13] Александр Зиновьев о причинах драпировки Мавзолея Ленина и негативного отношения к нему со стороны "верхов" https://dzen.ru/a/ZDpI7OIKAAgqvm3z?referrer_clid=1400&

command. Lenin said correctly that he picked up power on the street: it was lying on the street. In order to understand what was happening then in Russia, one can read the Babel of Sholokhov. It was a complete catastrophe. This country wasn't supposed to exist at all; it was destined to be self-destructed."[14]

Restoration of monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky

In bringing back icons of the Soviet past, it is not only common people who are coming forward, but in certain cases authorities, too, who are realizing that denial of Soviet legacy has done more harm than good to modern Russia. This realization has dawned in the wake of the Ukraine war to draw inspiration and mobilize people around the common goal of winning the war. Restoration of the monument to Felix Dzerzhinsky is one such example.

Felix Edmundovich Dzerzhinsky was the head of the national security agency in post-revolutionary Russia famously known as "Cheka" for its Russian abbreviation "VChK (Всероссийская Чрезвычайная Комиссия), All-Russia Emergency Commission). It was the predecessor of KGB, the Committee for State Security, which existed till the end of the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the monument to Dzerzhinsky which stood at Lubyanka in front of the KGB headquarters was demolished as a demonstrative act of destroying one of the potent symbols of the Bolshevist revolution in Russia. On 11 September 2023, a monument to Dzerzhinsky, the founder of Soviet security agencies, was restored and inaugurated in Moscow at the initiative of the government's Foreign Intelligence Agency, one of the successors of KGB .

[14] "С Лениным сравнить в мировой истории никого нельзя" - достойный ответ Карена Шахназарова всем антисоветчикам", https://dzen.ru/a/ZIVRRaLmTij6lO0F.

Return to the Soviet System of higher education

The launching of Special Military Operation in Ukraine in February 2022 and the punitive measures announced by the West in its wake left the Russian leadership with no choice but to recreate a new world of its own. For this purpose, it decided to take a fresh look at the Soviet legacy and pick what was valuable and served people's interest at that time. Crudely speaking, the new project resembled recreating Soviet Russia but without Lenin, Stalin, and socialism. Anything that didn't smack of Marxist ideology and could be billed as indigenous Russian was welcome for incorporation in the new endeavour. The decision to return to the Soviet system of higher education was one of those steps.

It was announced in May 2022 by Minister of Education and Science Valery Falkov who said Russia would abandon the Bologna system (European system) and would develop its own model of higher education. He emphasized the future lies with Russia's own education system. The issue was followed up by President Vladimir Putin on 21 February 2023 in his address to the Federal Assembly. He stated the need to return to the basic system of training in higher educational institutions, the so-called specialty. The duration of study under this scheme will be from four to six years - this is how the higher education system worked in the USSR.[15]

Revival of organizations for youth and children

In the Soviet Union, Komsomol - the Young Communist League was the platform for organizing the youth and preparing them for a role in state building. It was founded on 29 October 1918 to organize youth and channel the huge youth energy unleashed by the revolution to carry forward the tasks of socialist reconstruction. Heroic contributions made by Komsomol at the beginning have been nicely depicted in the famous novel by Nikolai Ostrovsky "How the steel was tempered (Как закалялась сталь)". In that novel Pavel Korchagin became the symbol of indomitable spirit of the youth of that period. Major construction projects associated with Komsomol as the key strike force were, among others, Magnitogorsk Steel Plant; Dneprovsk Hydro-electric Power Station, Kama Automobile Plant (famously known as KamAZ); Baikal-Amur Railway (BAM), and Development of Virgin Lands in Kazakhstan (Tselina). For looking after welfare and upbringing of children, the All-Union Pioneer Organization was formed on 19 May 1922. Both Komsomol and Pioneers played important roles in upbringing kids and the youth in the spirit of patriotism and devotion to the ideals of revolution. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, both these organizations affiliated with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union were disbanded. No one since bothered about recreating semblances of those organizations in post-Soviet Russia.

[15] От четырех до шести лет: в России решили вернуться к советской системе высшего образованияhttps://n-e-n.ru/sistema-obrazovanija/

However, in wake of the Ukraine war the Government announced in December 2022 establishment of a new youth movement called " Russian Movement of Children and Youth, the movement of the firsts (Движение первых)". The goal of the project is the patriotic education of the younger generation, as well as the introduction of various educational and developmental programmes.[16] It was almost the same as it was during the Soviet Union but minus the Marxist ideology and borrowing as much as possible from the Soviet legacy. But selective borrowing of the practices and methods from the Soviet heritage wasn't so easy and had limits if the intention was to exploit their advantages in a different context. On 19 April 2023, President Vladimir Putin suggested the government to consider changing the name of the proposed organization "Russian Movement of Children and Youth, the movement of the firsts (Движение первых)" to simply "Pioneers". To make the idea palatable to the liberals, he put forward an explanation, "In the old way, in the new way - as it was, so it is, there is no escape from it. This term, this name, unlike, say, the Komsomol - Young Communist League has no smell of ideology".[17]

Seventh November - the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution

Observance of the October Revolution Day on 7th November is the most important symbolic action for many Russian citizens to look back at their Soviet past. It was the most important national day in the Soviet Union. Traditionally the Day used to be observed by a military parade on the Red Square, where leaders of the party and the state standing atop Lenin's mausoleum took salute from marching columns of troops and delivered speeches. Similar parades and rallies used to be held in major cities in which all people, adults and kids, used to participate with great enthusiasm. The significance of 7th November in Soviet public has been captured in the following poem written by Russian-Soviet writer Samuel Marshak (Самуил Яковлевич Маршак)

День Седьмого ноября
Красный день календаря.
Погляди в свое окно:
Все на улице красно.
The Day of November seventh
Red day on the calendar;
Peep through your window:
Everything is red on the street.

Вьются флаги у ворот,
Пламенем пылая.
Видишь, музыка идет

[16] Эксперты выразили уверенность в возрождении молодежных организаций в России, https://lenta.ru/news/2023/05/31/molorg/

[17] О предложении Путина возродить пионеров. Мнение автора канала об этом, https://dzen.ru/a/ZEEq2orGQWBJ12-8?referrer_clid=1400&

Там, где шли трамваи.
Flags flutter at the gates
Radiating flame
Look, the music is playing
On the spot where the trams ran

Весь народ — и млад и стар
Празднует свободу.
И летит мой красный шар
Прямо к небосводу!
All people - both young and old
Celebrate freedom.
And my red ball flies
Straight to the sky!

It really was a holiday for which people used to prepare in advance. Relatives and friends exchanged holiday cards. Festive events used to be held in kindergartens and schools. Ceremonial meetings followed by concerts used to be held in production enterprises. The most distinguished employees received certificates of honour.
Entire families used to attend festive demonstrations. It used to be followed by festive feasts. For some reason, on this date people loved to gather in large groups with friends, relatives, and acquaintances.

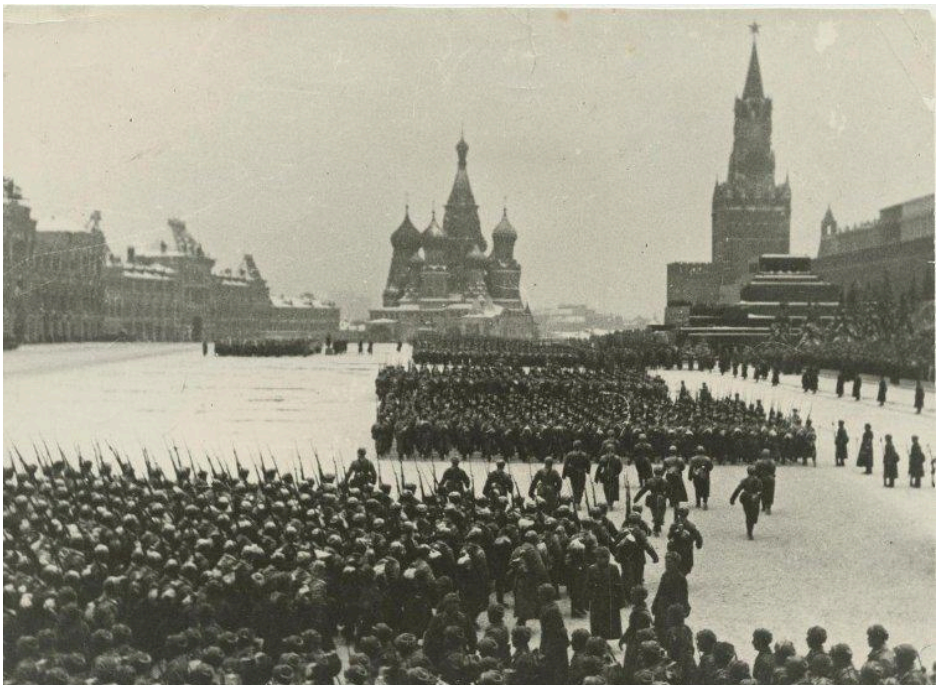
On this day, the Central Television used to broadcast a special programme themed “Festive Blue Light Праздничный Голубой огонек” in which best people of the country participated.[18]

In post-Soviet Russia, the authorities would rather have the public forget about this day. In the official version, the significance of the Day has been reduced to a military coup in which Bolshevists illegally seized power from the Provisional Government. To shift the focus of the public away from this Day, a new holiday called the “Day of National Unity” was introduced for observance on 4th November. But the Revolution couldn’t be suppressed. It lives on. It is still widely celebrated despite many obstacles. T

[18] День 7 ноября Красный день календаря. Как в СССР праздновали годовщину Великой Октябрьской
революции; https://dzen.ru/a/YYe6D3eAOiVvp-1e

The authorities observed the 7th November in their own way under the banner “the Day of Military Glory (День Воинской Славы)” dedicated to the legendary military parade held on the Red Square on 7 November 1941 from where the soldiers headed to the front to fight the invading German Army. Moscow’s Mayor Sergei Sobyanin laid floral wreaths at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Alexander Garden on 7 November 2023.[19] But while celebrating that memorable parade, the authorities conveniently omit the most significant part: who organized the parade, who provided the leadership, and who gave the speech to inspire the soldiers to fight the enemy troops standing on the outskirts of Moscow. Let’s look at the details of that parade.

naya_le



The parade on the Red Square was led by Army Commander Pavel Artyomov. Marshal Budyonny (he replaced Marshal Zhukov who was at the command post on that day) took a military salute from the marching troops. Atop Lenin's mausoleum were standing leaders of the country: Yosif Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, Georgi Malenkov, and Lavrenty Beria. The parade lasted a little over an hour; 28,467 people took part in the parade. Yosif Stalin addressed the participants with the following speech:
" Comrades, personnel of the Red Army and Red Navy; collective farmers, intellectual workers, brothers and sisters behind our enemy lines, temporarily falling under the control of German robbers, our heroic guerrilla fighters destroying the rear of the German invaders!
On behalf of the Soviet Government, our Bolshevik Party, I greet you and congratulate you on the 24th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Comrades, we have to celebrate today the 24th anniversary of the October Revolution in difficult conditions. The treacherous attack of German thugs and the war forced on us created a threat to our country. We, for the time being, lost a number of regions, the enemy is approaching the gates of Leningrad and Moscow. The enemy thought that following the first blow, our army would fall apart and our country could be brought to its knees. But the army badly miscalculated. Despite temporary setbacks our army and our navy were heroically repulsing enemy attacks along the entire front, inflicting heavy damages on them, and our country - our entire country - organized itself into a single camp in order, together with our army and our navy, to defeat the German invaders.

There were days when our country was in an even more difficult situation. Remember 1918, when we celebrated the first anniversary of the October Revolution. Three quarters of our country was then in the hands of foreign interventionists. Ukraine, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East were temporarily lost to us. We had no allies, we did not have the Red Army - we had just begun to create it - there was not enough bread, not enough weapons, not enough uniforms. Fourteen states were pressing on our land at that time. But we did not lose heart. In the fire of war, we then organized the Red Army and turned our country into a military camp. The spirit of the great Lenin inspired us then to fight against the invaders. And what next? We destroyed the invaders and reconquered all of the lost territories.

Now the situation of our country is much better than it was 23 years ago. Our country is now many times richer in industry, food, and raw materials than it was 23 years ago. We now have allies who are holding a united front with us against the German invaders. We now have the sympathy and support of all the peoples of Europe who fell under the yoke of Hitler's tyranny. We now have a wonderful army and a wonderful navy, defending with their chests the freedom and independence of our Motherland. We do not have a serious shortage of food, weapons, or uniforms. Our entire country, all the peoples of our country support our army, our navy, helping them defeat the aggressive hordes of German fascists. Our human reserves are inexhaustible. The spirit of the great Lenin and his victorious banner now inspire us for the Patriotic War just as they did 23 years ago.

Can there be any doubt that we can and must defeat the German invaders?
The enemy is not as strong as some frightened intellectuals portray him. The devil is not as scary as he is painted. Who can deny that our Red Army more than once turned the vaunted German troops into panic flight? If we judge not by the boastful statements of German propagandists, but by the actual situation in Germany, it will not be difficult to understand that the Nazi invaders are facing a catastrophe. In Germany, hunger and impoverishment now reign, in four months of the war, Germany lost four and a half million soldiers, Germany is bleeding, its human reserves are drying up, the spirit of indignation takes hold not only of the peoples of Europe who fell under the yoke of the German invaders, but also of the German people themselves, who does not see the end of the war. The German invaders are straining their last strength. There is no doubt that Germany cannot withstand such tension for long. A few more months, another six months, maybe a year - and Hitler’s Germany should burst under the weight of its crimes.

Comrades, Red Army and Red Navy men, commanders and political workers, and partisans! The whole world looks at you as a force capable of destroying the predatory hordes of German invaders. The enslaved peoples of Europe, who fell under the yoke of the German invaders, look at you as their liberators. The great liberation mission has fallen to your lot. Be worthy of this mission! The war you are waging is a war of liberation, a just war. Let the courageous image of our great ancestors - Alexander Nevsky, Dimitry Donskoy, Kuzma Minin, Dimitry Pozharsky, Alexander Suvorov, Mikhail Kutuzov - inspire you in this war! Let the invincible banner of the great Lenin overshadow you!

For the complete defeat of the German invaders!
Death to the German occupiers!
Long live our glorious Motherland, its freedom, its independence!
Under the banner of Lenin - forward to victory!”[20]

ПРАВДА

Гитлеровская Германия разгромлена. Советский народ празднует великую победу

Торжество в столице

Капитуляция

Первое слово обращено к Сталину

“Да здравствует наша победа!”

М. РЫЛЬСКИЙ

День победы

I

Ликуйте, радуйтесь,— так вот он, день победы!
Его мы ждали так, как поле ждет весны,
О нем мы думали, все побеждая беды,
Под грохот пушек, под грозовы войны.
Мы жили этим днем, любя и ненавидя.
Во сне и любую ночь мы видели его.
Мы в трудный шли поход, вдали над пеплом вида
Его расцветное святое торжество.

И вот он наступил; прекрасен, величавый,
Он лучезарные свои простер крыла.
Так вот он, этот день. Его нам дарит Сталин.
Родному Сталину — и слава и хвала!

II

Маршалу Сталину — слава, хвала!
Маршала Сталина — славны дела.
Орды фашистов повержены в прах,
Сталину — слава в веках!

Мир он несёт всем народам земли,—
Зверь побежден, издыхает в пыли.
Радость в свободных пылает сердцах:
Сталину — слава в веках!

Перевел с украинского Ивн. УШАКОВ.

To what extent Yosif Stalin and his leadership was central to the Soviet Union’s victory in WWII was illustrated in the news article published in the newspaper Pravda on 9 May 1945 (picture shown above). The headline says “Hitler’s Germany is defeated. Soviet people celebrate a great victory.” The upper part of the left-hand two columns is titled “Celebration in the Capital”, and the lower part says “the first word is addressed to Stalin”. The right-hand column is titled “Surrender”. A banner titled “Long live our victory” with a soldier holding the portrait of Stalin printed on a flag in the background is posted in the

[20] 7 ноября 1941 года: речь Сталина на знаменитом военном параде на Красной площади, https://dzen.ru/a/ZUoQJ-l92ktGECrq?referrer_clid=1400&

middle. A poem dedicated to victory is posted under the banner, which is reproduced below and translated.

День победы
М. Рыльский
Victory Day
M. Rilsky
Ликуйте, радуйтесь, — так вот он, день победы!
Его мы ждали так, как поле ждет весны,
О нем мы думали, все побеждая беды.
Под грохот молотов, под грохоты войны.
Мы жили этим днем, любя и ненавидя.
Во сне в любую ночь мы видели его.
Мы в трудный шли поход, вдали над пеплом видя
Его рассветное святое торжество.

И вот он наступил; прекрасен, беспечален.
Он лучезарные свои простер крыла.
Так вот он, этот день. Его нам дарит Сталин.
Родному Сталину — и слава и хвала!

Rejoice, feel glad - here it is the victory day!
We waited for it like a field waits for the spring,
We thought about it all the way overcoming troubles,
Under the roar of hammers, under the roar of war,
We lived for this day, with love and hate.
Any night we saw it in dreams.
We went on a difficult campaign, seeing far away above the ashes,
Dawning of its holy triumph.

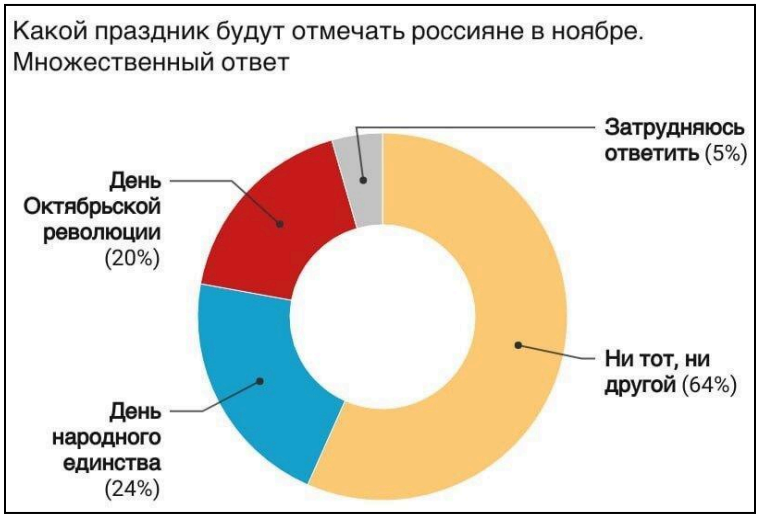
And so it came; beautiful, carefree.
It spread its radiant wings.
And here it is, this day. Stalin gifted it to us.
To our Dear Stalin - glory and praise!

II
Маршалу Сталину — слава, хвала!
Маршала Сталина — славны дела:
Орды фашистов повержены в прах,
Сталину — слава в веках!
Мир он несёт всем народам земли. —
Зверь побеждён, издыхает в пыли.

Радость в свободных пылает сердцах:
Сталину — слава в веках!

To Marshall Stalin - glory and praise!
Marshall Stalin did - glorious deeds:
Hordes of fascists are crushed into ashes,
Glory to Stalin for centuries!
He brings peace to all peoples of the world.-
The beast is defeated, dies in the dust.
Joy burns in free hearts:
Glory to Stalin for centuries.

People's outpouring of gratitude, love and respect to Stalin at the moment of victory was an indication that his name was inseparable from the Soviet Union's victory in WWII. Therefore, celebrating at present the legendary November 7, 1941 parade on the Red Square without reference to Joseph Stalin and the Bolshevik Party leadership is hardly an honest effort. In the larger context, celebrating on 7th November the parade that took place in 1941 instead of observing the anniversary of the October Revolution is a poor surgery on history. But while the authorities for now have decided to play around the history of the Soviet era, people haven't forgotten that glorius part of their history. Levada Centre, an independent analytical centre in Russia, conducted an All-Russia survey on September 21-27, 2023 using a representative all-Russian sample of urban and rural households with 1,633 people aged 18 years and older in 137 population centres covering 50 constituent entities of the Russian Federation. The survey was conducted at the respondents' home using personal interviews. The distribution of responses was given as a percentage of the total[21]. The question asked was "Which holiday Russians will observe in November"; there were four choices: Day of October Revolution (red colour), Day of National Unity (blue), None of them (brown), Feel difficulty in answering (grey). The results are shown in the picture below:



[21] НОЯБРЬСКИЕ ПРАЗДНИКИ В 2023 ГОДУ,
https://www.levada.ru/2023/11/02/noyabrskie-prazdniki-v-2023-godu/

Of the total, 24 percent indicated preference for the Day of National Unity, 20 percent for the Day of October Revolution, 64 percent didn't have preference for either while 5 percent had difficulty answering the question. The survey showed despite years of negative publicity in an attempt to erase the October Revolution day from the memory of people, still one in five people in Russia wants to celebrate this day. This number doesn't lag far behind the number for the official Unity Day, which has been promoted by years of investment in media support for establishing the day as the main holiday of Russia.

In another survey conducted on 7 November 2023 by the Foundation of Social Opinion (Фонд Общественное мнение), It was found that half of the survey participants believe that the October Revolution had overall more positive consequences for Russia. It was the answer to the questions posed: "after the revolution the country began to develop more"; "as a result of the October Revolution, Russia became a developed industrial power; "Life has become better for ordinary people". Of the respondents 21 percent believe there were more negative consequences. It was the answer to the questions posed: "history cannot be changed by making such sacrifices"; "economically our country was thrown 100 years back"; "Russia's development was slowed down". In response to the question "And if you lived at that time, would you rather support the "reds" or rather the "whites" in the Civil War", 49 percent supported the "reds", 9 percent whites, and 12 percent neither of the two[22]. The results of these surveys clearly show growing support in the Russian society for the October Revolution and increase of positive view of the Soviet Union.

Search for new ideology

Unlike the Soviet Union, the constitution of the Russian Federation doesn't provide for an official ideology. But it implicitly acknowledges upholding of liberal and social-democratic values which are the same as Western ideology. A famous philosopher and ideologue of modern Russia, Aleksandr Dugin refers to post-Soviet Russia as a state built on the ruins of the USSR in 1991 with liberal, Westernized values, completely loyal to a world government run by a group of criminal oligarchs who stole our wealth in criminal loans-for-shares auctions.[23] But when Russia was forced out of the Western club of democracies, it had no choice but to recreate a new world of its own. The search for a new ideology

[22] Годовщина Октябрьской революции: Восприятие и оценка Октябрьской революции россиянами, https://fom.ru/Proshloe/14940

[23] А.Г. Дугин. Новая идеология России; https://vrns.ru/news/a-g-dugin-novaya-ideologiya-rossii/

distinct from the Western values is part of this effort much in the same way Marxism-Leninism was in the Soviet Union and the world socialist system.

But the big challenge on this front is how to craft a new homegrown ideology that would inspire the people and power the development of Russia in the same way Marxist ideology did in the Soviet Union. For this purpose, emphasis has been given to traditional values. The Presidential Decree Number 809 signed on 9 November 2022 provides a list of 14 traditional values to be used as constituents of Russia's own ideology: Life; dignity; human rights and freedom; patriotism, citizenship, service to the Fatherland and responsibility for its fate; high moral ideals; strong family bond; creative labour; priority of the spiritual over the material; humanism; charity; justice; collectivism, mutual help and mutual respect; historical memory and continuity of generations, and unity of the peoples of Russia[24]. A close look at this list shows many of these values are the same as those embodied by a Soviet person (Советский человек), but rephrased to look devoid of Marxist socialism. In other words, it signals readiness of the authorities to accept and incorporate non-internationalist ideological part of the Soviet legacy to frame a new Russian ideology to again mobilize people and inspire them to aim for grandiose achievements that took place during the Soviet era.

Technological sovereignty

Among the relatively new items of the Russian Government's top policy agenda is technological sovereignty (Технологический суверенитет). As the name suggests, it is about achieving independence in creating and accessing cutting-edge modern technologies to power the country's economic development over the period of the sixth industrial revolution. The urgency of achieving technological sovereignty is driven by Western sanctions on Russia in wake of its special military operation in Ukraine. In the larger context, it is a vital part of creating a self-sufficient economy reminiscent of the Soviet era. To plan and coordinate government initiatives across identified sectors of the economy, the Government has resorted to central planning as was the practice in the Soviet Union.[25] Russian scientists have proposed reviving the Soviet Gosplan system in the country, but in a modern way - in digital form. They consider such a system, among other things, should help achieve the country's technological sovereignty. This initiative came from a group of scientists and experts from Moscow Bauman State Technical University; Plekhanov Economic University; Moscow Lomonosov State University; and Moscow University of Finance and Law in which they jointly proposed to revive the Gosplan (Soviet Union's central planning agency) system in the country, which operated in the USSR from 1923 until the collapse of the country in 1991.[26]
In the long run, unless Russia surrenders to the West and abides by its rules, there is little chance for lifting the Western sanctions imposed on it thus limiting its potential for economic

[24] Новая суверенная идеология России, https://neobovsem.ru/novaya-suverennaya-ideologiya-russia/
[25] Госплан возвращается. Путин одобрил предложение Белоусова, https://dzen.ru/a/ZUvYz7sUaG89huzg?referrer_clid=1400&

[26] Российские ученые предложили возродить в стране советскую систему Госплана, https://dzen.ru/a/Y-xrA4OCAHEKjX-X?referrer_clid=1400&

growth through international trade and capital investment. The only alternative for Russia is to focus inward; embrace nationalization and proceed with building a self-sufficient economy using Soviet-era approaches of state-directed planning but with new tools and methods.

New law to protect integrity of the Russian language

The counter-revolution of 1991 destroyed not only the Soviet country, its socialist economy and the social system but also inflicted colossal damage on the rich Russian culture and the language. The new ruling class and its associates who took control of the country's economy opened the door for uncontrolled penetration of English words in the Russian language under the pretext of necessity to introduce market economy and integrate with the Western world. Widespread use of English-sounding words led to displacement of original Russian words. Over the 30 years since Russia's ruling class decided to break with their Soviet past, the language of Tolstoi, Pushkin, and Dostoyevski changed unbelievably due to wilful use of foreign language words. In the race to borrow English words, none in Russia's upper class - government bureaucrats, political leaders, business people and even the scientists and academicians wanted to be left behind. Those who had the opportunity of learning the Russian language in the country of its origin during the Soviet era know the vitality of the Russian language and its attractiveness lies in its words.

The Government had to step in with control measures to protect the Russian language from excessive foreign borrowing. The State Duma adopted a law in February 2023 which, among others, stipulates that when using the Russian language as the state language of the Russian Federation, the use of words and expressions that do not comply with the norms of the modern Russian literary language is not allowed, with the exception of foreign words that have no commonly used analogues in the Russian language and the list of which is contained in the specified normative dictionaries.[27] However, without provisions for enforcement with punitive measures for non-compliance, the law remains symbolic and there is little change on the ground. People's mindset has to change, specifically the mindset that the more of the foreign words are borrowed, the greater is the chance for acceptance and recognition in Western world. But it is unlikely to happen on its own. It requires an aggressive campaign in support of the usage of original indigenous Russian words. In other words, a new version of the Cultural Revolution needs to be launched to protect Russia from invasion of foreign culture and traditions. But it is hardly an option with the social and administrative system now present in the Russian Federation. One example will show the creeping penetration of foreign words in the Russian language. We are quite familiar with the word "campus", the Russian word for campus during the Soviet era was " студенческий городок or студгородок". Now, it is rarely used; the most common is the russified version of "campus" in the form of "кампус".

[27] Госдума приняла закон о защите русского языка от чрезмерных иностранных заимствований, https://www.consultant.ru/law/hotdocs/79204.html